REMARKS

A final Office Action was mailed on December 14, 2004. Claims 1 - 28 are pending in the present application. With this response, Applicants cancel claims 5, 14 and 23 without prejudice or disclaimer, amend claims 1, 6, 10, 15, 19, 24 and 28, and add new claims 29 - 31. No new matter is introduced. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, with reference to Applicants' FIGs. 1 – 3, and to Applicants' specification at page 6, line 12 thorough page 14, line 12, and at page 34, lines 11 – 13.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103

Claims 1 – 7, 9 – 16, 17 – 25 and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,766,079 to Kataoka et al. Claims 8, 17 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kataoka. Applicants cancel claims 5, 14 and 23 without prejudice or disclaimer, amend claims 1, 10 and 19 in part to respectively and essentially include the limitations of canceled claims 5, 14 and 23, amend claims 6, 15 and 24 to respectively depend from amended claims 1, 10 and 19, and amend claim 28. Applicants respectfully traverse the cited rejections.

In amended independent claim 1, Applicants claim:

> **1.** A virtual space control method, comprising the steps of:
>
> changing an orientation of a prescribed part of a virtual character in a virtual space;
>
> changing a screen image in response to the change in orientation of the prescribed part, wherein the screen image represents a virtual field of view of the virtual space defined by a viewpoint other than a viewpoint of the virtual character and including a whole image of the virtual character; and
>
> moving the virtual character in the virtual space;

wherein the step of changing the screen image has a step of changing the screen image in response to the movement of the virtual character and to the change in orientation of the prescribed part.

(Emphasis added)

Kataoka discloses an object direction control method and apparatus (see, e.g., abstract of Kataoka). These are applied, for example, to a tank game in which a line of sight (viewpoint) is determined on the basis of a steering angle of the tank (see, e.g., column 6, lines 1 – 67 of Kataoka). A screen display is determined based on selected position of a virtual camera with respect to the tank (see, e.g., FIGs. 7A through 7C of Kataoka). Unlike Applicants' claimed invention ,of claim 1, however, Kataoka fails to explicitly disclose that the screen display is configured to provide a whole image of the virtual character (compare, e.g., with FIGs.. 8, 9 of Kataoka, illustrating a field of view including only a portion of tank 31).

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1 is not anticipated or made obvious by Kataoka, and is therefore allowable. Applicants apply similar arguments with respect to independent amended claims 10 and 19, and submit thereby that claims 10 and 19 are allowable. As claims 2 – 4, 6 – 9, 11 – 13, 15 – 18, 20 – 22 and 24 – 27 each depend from one of allowable claims 1, 10, and 19, Applicants further submit that claims 2 – 4, 6 – 9, 11 – 13, 15 – 18, 20 – 22 and 24 – 27 are allowable for at least this reason.

NEW CLAIMS

Applicants add new claims 29 – 31, respectively depending from claims 4, 13 and 22, which in turn respectively depend from independent claims 1, 14 and 19. Claims 1, 4 and 29, for example, disclose the following:

1. A virtual space control method, comprising the steps of:

changing an orientation of a prescribed part of a virtual character in a virtual

space;

changing a screen image in response to the change in orientation of the prescribed part, wherein the screen image represents a virtual field of view of the virtual space defined by a viewpoint other than a viewpoint of the virtual character and including a whole image of the virtual character; and

moving the virtual character in the virtual space;

wherein the step of changing the screen image has a step of changing the screen image in response to the movement of the virtual character and to the change in orientation of the prescribed part.

4. The virtual space control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

detecting an occurrence of a prescribed event, and

wherein the step of changing the orientation includes a step of changing the orientation of the prescribed part in response to the occurrence of the prescribed event.

29. The virtual space control method of claim 4, wherein the prescribed event is selected from a plurality of events occurring in the virtual space.

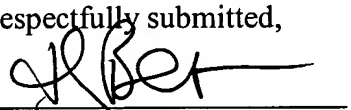
As disclosed by Applicants, the "prescribed event" of claim can represent a variety of events occurring in the virtual space (see, e.g., page 13, lines 4 – 13 of Applicants' specification describing an example event as eye contact generated between two on-screen characters in a soccer game). While it is known in the prior art to change the orientation of a prescribed part such as a character on the basis of a controller command (see, e.g., page 2, lines 11 – 19 of Applicants' specification), Applicants respectfully submit that Kataoka and Applicants' admitted prior art (AAPA) fail to suggest or disclose changes to the orientation are based on the occurrence of a prescribed event in the virtual space. On this basis, Applicants respectfully submit that new claims 29 - 31 recite allowable subject matter.

CONCLUSION

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that claims 1 – 4, 6 –13, 15 — 22, 24 – 27, and 29 – 31, consisting of independent claims 1, 10, 19 and 28, and the claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, he or she is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



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